

**AFRICA'S FUTURE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY
COUNCIL OF AMERICAN AMBASSADORS FALL 2014 CONFERENCE
CLOSING REMARKS FOR DAY ONE BY AMBASSADOR DONALD T. BLISS**

My job is to summarize briefly some of the highlights of a day jam-packed with insightful information, acute analysis, and wisdom from the practical experience of our expert speakers. It is a daunting task.

In his opening remarks, Utah Governor Gary R. Herbert set the stage by suggesting that Utah's successful approach to economic growth was the result of setting goals for education, the economy and job creation and measuring progress in achieving them. This should be the approach to development in Africa as well, since the same overall objective is shared: "What can we do to help people have a better life."

Council president, Ambassador Timothy A. Chorba, noted that when he and Kirk Jowers, the Director of the Hinckley Institute of Politics, began planning this conference, Africa was on the upswing, evidenced by the strong economic growth of many of its 54 countries. And it still is. Six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world are in Africa. Yet, in the intervening months, the media is deluged with stories about crises in Africa: the fear of Ebola, human rights violations in Egypt quashing the hopes of the Arab spring, Boko Haram and the kidnapping of school girls in Nigeria; conflict in fragile and failed states creating breeding grounds for terrorism, al-Shabaab in Somalia, warring militia in Libya, a power struggle between elected leaders in South Sudan, religious conflict in the Central African Republic, insurgency in Mali, guerilla forces in the eastern Congo, and so forth. For the first time in human history, the United Nations is aiding over 50 million refugees, many of them in Africa, and 125,000 UN Peacekeepers are in 16 conflict zones, many in Africa.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, led off the morning with a candid assessment. Recognizing that "bad news sells," she noted that she had not taken the job simply to fight fires, and that it is essential to balance short and long term strategies. On the positive front, the Africa Leaders Summit brought 45 heads of state to Washington DC to meet with executive branch, private sector, civic and legislative leaders to agree upon a plan to invest \$33 billion in trade and investment in Africa, to partner with Power Africa in bringing electricity to 60 million Africans, to commit \$150 million to African peacekeeping and Rapid Response capability as part of a Security Government Initiative (SGI), and to bring 500 young Mandela Fellows to the United States (out of 50,000 applicants). The Mandela program, which should be substantially expanded, emphasizes skills training, not politics. The key to a successful Summit of this kind is follow-up to implement the bold action plan agreed to. Renewal and extension of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act which expires in 2015 is critical.

Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield also addressed the Ebola crisis, noting that Nigeria successfully conquered the disease and has been declared Ebola free, as has Senegal. She affirmed the Administration's commitment to send military engineers and health workers to West Africa where the epidemic must be quashed, and noted that while the United States will contribute \$258 million in assistance and \$1 billion in DOD funding, it cannot eradicate Ebola

alone. Global cooperation and financial and technical support is essential, including a strengthened World Health Organization (WHO). Acknowledging that the economies of Liberia, Gambia and Sierra Leone, among the poorest in the world, have been devastated by this crisis, she called for a Marshall Plan to build the infrastructure, and provide roads, access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, health care, and job-creating sustainable economic development needed to prevent such outbreaks in the future. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield concluded, “that despite all the bad news, Africa’s future is bright.”

Former Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell then spoke about the Boko Haram, demonstrating the value of an ambassador who is also a scholar with a deep knowledge of the culture and history of the country to which he is posted. He sees Boko Haram as primarily an insurgency against the vestiges of British colonialism manifested in the current government in Abuja, and not an immediate international terrorist threat although it could morph into one. Addressing the long term causes of its rise and influence, Ambassador Campbell stressed that the Nigerian government must reduce the brutality, corruption and human rights violations of the military, police force and government. He thought the soft diplomacy approach of the National Security Council was correct. Ambassador Campbell’s talk illustrated the importance of US policy addressing the root causes that incentivize terrorist organizations and insurgencies and attract members.

Colonel John C. Garrett, USMC (ret), traced the “Arc of Instability” throughout the continent, assessing various conflict zones, including Egypt, Libya, Mali, Somalia and the CAR. He noted a “ray of hope” in Somalia, which has its first elected parliament in 20 years and has driven al-Shabaab from urban centers. Through perseverance, sustainable development, and the work of UN peacekeepers, among others, Somalia may indicate a way forward, transforming the “Arc of Instability” into an “Arc of Opportunity.” Colonel Garret also spoke of the supportive role of AFRICOM as a military tool that enhances diplomacy.

Luncheon speaker former Utah Governor and United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, Michael O. Leavitt, spoke about “health as a good ministry of Peace.” He stressed the importance of integrating “soft diplomacy with hard power” in US strategic policy. In this respect, the provision of health care should be elevated as a diplomatic tool. Relating specific stories, Governor Leavitt illustrated how responding directly to the health care needs of the poorest populations creates enormous good will, countering the forces that inflame anti-American bias and incentivize terrorism.

Addressing health care pandemics, Secretary Leavitt stressed that “the world is only as safe as its weakest link.” The United States cannot address pandemics like Ebola alone, but must encourage global cooperation, including through the WHO, as complex and challenging as it is working with 194 nations. Pandemics are inevitable, a fact of life, but since they tend to happen decades apart, we do not learn well from history or prepare adequately for them. There are four stages in addressing pandemics: 1) try to snuff it out, 2) contain its spread, 3) prevention—develop a vaccine, and 4) minimize the damage.

Dr. Daniel Bausch, an expert on virology and infectious diseases who recently returned from West Africa, discussed the Ebola crises in clear, scientific terms, tracing its history,

clarifying its transmission, and explaining how it got ahead of the capability of the world's poorest countries and the global community to contain it and what is being done to catch up. Expressing concern about media hype and fear in the United States based on misinformation, Dr. Bausch stressed that 1) Ebola is a West African problem and must be addressed there, and 2) it is critical to stick to the science and not overreact. He thought that suspending air travel between the United States and West Africa would be counterproductive.

Ms. Rosa Whitaker then addressed the assembled group of Ambassadors, guests, Hinckley Institute members, students and faculty. She set forth an aspirational timeframe predicting where Africa could be by the year 2050. She stressed the importance of having a long term vision and plan. She envisioned an Africa with a population of 2.5 billion, 25 percent of the global population, with a strong middle class and labor force and a diversified mineral and manufacturing-based economy. She stressed the importance of trade and investment as an essential part of the United Nations post-2015 development agenda, the next phase of the partially successful millennium development goals of 2000. Trade is worth five times development aid. Encouraging trade means renewing OPIC and the EXIM Bank and, most importantly, extending the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. Food aid, while essential to prevent starvation, can have a distortive effect on strengthening agricultural production whereas trade and investment in agricultural productivity could make Africa a food exporter.

The final speaker of the afternoon was Dr. Joshua Eisenman who addressed Chinese-African trade. In 2009 China became Africa's largest trading partner. In 2013, Chinese exports to Africa totaled \$210 billion, up from \$166 billion in 2011. In contrast US exports in 2013 totaled \$85 billion, a 32 percent drop from 2011, although much of this is attributable to declining oil imports from Nigeria as the United States approached energy independence. China's objectives are straight forward: 1) access to raw materials, in order to 2) increase the exports of finished products, and 3) expand China's economic presence globally. Despite China's growing presence, recent sophisticated surveys show that the Africans have a very negative view of Chinese investments and labor practices.

The Conference covered a broad range of US policy interests in Africa—economic development, trade, investment, health, conflict resolution, insurgencies and terrorism, and military support. As the Ebola crisis dominates the media, it inevitably was a recurring issue during the discussion. In terms of a longer range strategy for Africa, does the media focus on the Ebola crisis present any positive opportunities? Perhaps for the average American it illustrates: 1) that we live in an interconnected global community. Pandemics do not respect sovereign borders. 2) Addressing Ebola requires global cooperation; the United States cannot do it alone. And 3) Preventing such global crises in the future will require a cooperative effort to build the infrastructure in Africa and other developing countries: roads, access to clean water, health care, sanitation, economic growth and job creation, and efficient, honest government. Perhaps this is the message we should be conveying to the American people.